

her family, let me say, our thoughts and prayers are with you during these difficult days ahead. To quote Senator BYRD from the other day, she was "one of a kind."

She had a tangible presence in the Senate. We are lesser now with the loss of her southern grace.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I join with the majority leader and the Democratic leader in a tribute to Mary Miller Arnold who served us so well in the Senate and recently passed away. We join in expressing our condolences to Mary Arnold's family, her husband Ed, her son Edwin, Jr., and her daughter Mary Elizabeth.

Her sudden and unexpected death comes as a shock to all of us as we return to the Senate Chamber expecting to see her smiling face as we have for so many years. I am so used to seeing her sitting near the door on the bench where the Democratic staffers sit. What an impression she made every single day I saw her. Perfect posture, impeccably dressed, every hair in place, always gracious, always professional, carried herself with such dignity and grace.

Those who watch C-SPAN across America will know her instantly because she was part of the Senate process, part of the Senate family. She sat just as straight, just as polished, even before the C-SPAN cameras. She did this because of the respect she had for the Senate and for her role, which was very important. She loved the Senate and everything it stood for. She considered it a privilege to work in the U.S. Capitol, as we all do, and especially on the Senate floor.

I didn't know until the other day that Mary actually began working for a Republican Congressman from Illinois, Roger Zion. She moved to Washington in 1960 with her husband Ed, who had taken a job with a congressman from Indiana. Her daughter Mary Elizabeth worked in the Republican cloakroom for several years while she was a law student. As for Mary's own political affiliation, I don't have any idea. She was a true professional. It is to her credit that she was in service to the Democratic side of the aisle but had equal respect for both sides of the aisle. She was beyond partisanship. She really was a part of the whole Senate family. She treated everyone with such respect and professionalism, so gracious to junior staffers and pages and Senators alike.

She performed so many countless acts of kindness in the 21 years she served here. People are now speaking out about those and I am glad they shared some of them. If a coworker needed a kind word, Mary was one of the first. Once a coworker had a financial difficulty, Mary found out about it and lent that person some money, then gently refused to accept full repayment. She was such a good and generous person. Mary will be missed.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader.

FINAL WEEK OF THE 109TH CONGRESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today we begin the final week, as I understand it, for the work created for the 109th Congress. There are only a few days left to complete a mountain of work, 2 years of work, really. The mission we have before the Senate these next few days is an impossible mission. It is truly a mission impossible, but we have to try.

The American people made it clear last month they want Members to work together. The judgment was held on whether a one-party town works and the American people said no. We have to work together. We have to work together this week and certainly when we come back after the first of the year.

To accomplish what needs to be accomplished in the next few days is mission impossible. We cannot get it all done. Appropriations bills, budget, health care nominations, conference reports for all kinds of things that, as I have said, somehow never make it to the other side of the Capitol.

I told Democratic Senators gathered recently that many of them have never, ever, participated in a conference, a conference between the House and Senate. Why? Because the Republicans would not hold them. We simply did not have them. Some of the most memorable times of my career were when I participated in conferences. A bill passed the Senate, a bill passed the House, you meet together, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate, to work out the differences.

This administration and the Republican-dominated House and Senate did not believe in that. They did not believe in 200 years of experience. They did not hold conferences. They would bring a bill back that the Republicans in the House and the Republicans in the Senate agreed upon. We had to take it or leave it, period.

That is not the way it is going to be next year. We are going to have Senators participating in things that many of them have never participated in: a real live conference, where Democrats and Republicans from the House and the Senate meet in a room and work out the differences on a bill.

This year we have so much to do. And as I said, it is mission impossible. If we had years left, if we had months left, if we had weeks left in the 109th Congress, maybe we could do something about it. But we have days remaining to finish all the items I have mentioned, and many more.

I want to comment briefly. My friend, the distinguished majority leader, talked about the nuclear option. One reason we are here in the waning moments of the 109th Congress trying

to complete the work that needs to be completed is because, again, the Republicans who control the House and the Senate—but here in this instance the Senate—decided to do away with 200 years of experience in this Senate. It was decided by the Republicans—because there were 55 Republicans and 45 Democrats—that they did not want the Senate to be the Senate. They wanted the Senate to be the House.

In the House of Representatives, if you have more than the other party, you get whatever you want. That is not how the Senate has worked for more than 200 years. The Republicans in the Senate in the 109th Congress said, we want another House of Representatives. They adopted the so-called nuclear option. They were not getting enough judges, enough of their right-wing, ideological judges. They were not getting enough—but it was well over 100. I don't know how many it is now. They were not getting enough. They wanted every one of them and they were willing to throw the traditions of this Senate overboard.

One of the negative things that happened in my political career was having to oppose the nuclear option. I said at the time, I say today, the most important thing I have ever worked on in my governmental career is the nuclear option because it was so anti-Senate, so antigovernment. I said in the Senate, why are you doing this? Why are you doing this, my friends, the Republicans? It would take a miracle for us to retake the Senate. As a result of the nuclear option and the other very bad things this Republican-dominated Senate did, the miracle occurred. One reason it occurred is because of the nuclear option. The American people knew that was beyond the pale.

We want to get our work done this year. We are willing to work up until Christmas, if necessary. We want to finish what we have to finish. I have talked to the majority leader. He knows the things I think should be done, must be done. We are leaving many things undone. However, as I said before, it is mission impossible. We cannot do it all; there is simply not enough time.

We spent too much time on the nuclear option, on estate tax, on gay marriage, on flag burning. The American people said, Why don't you work on our issues? On November 7, they said, Work together on our issues. We are committed to working together on the issues of the American people.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until the hour of 2 o'clock, with the Senator from Ohio, Senator DEWINE, permitted to speak for up to 2 hours.